

**DECISION NOTICE  
AND  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
MARINE MAMMAL CENTER SITE AND FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT**

National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior  
Golden Gate National Recreation Area

**INTRODUCTION**

This Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is presented by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), a unit of the National Park Service (NPS), for the Marine Mammal Center Site and Facilities Improvements. The FONSI, along with the Marine Mammal Center Site and Facilities Improvements Environmental Assessment (EA), and the Errata sheets comprise the full and complete record of environmental impact analysis. The FONSI and mitigation measures are specific to work to be completed at the Marine Mammal Center within the project area. The Errata sheets contain changes to the EA as a result of the public comment period; none of the comments resulted in major changes to the alternatives, mitigations, or other key sections of the EA.

**PURPOSE OF ACTION**

The Marine Mammal Center (the Center) located in the Marin Headlands on land owned and managed under NPS by the GGNRA. The Center is a rehabilitation hospital for marine mammals that treats hundreds of injured, ill or orphaned marine mammals that are stranded in coastal waters every year.

The Center operates under a Cooperative Agreement with the NPS that delegates responsibilities of operation and management of the site to the Center. The GGNRA General Management Plan was amended in 1981 to incorporate the Center as a core institution of the Headlands Center for the Environment. The Center rescues, rehabilitates, and releases marine mammals, some of which are threatened and endangered. Scientists at the Center not only research diseases that afflict marine mammals but also develop new treatments for these diseases. The Center reaches over 60,000 people each year with on- and off-site programs and conducts public education campaigns to reduce human interference in marine mammal habitat. Pursuant to the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, the Center is licensed by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to be the rescue organization for marine mammals for 600 miles of California coastline.

The purpose of the project is render a facility that will allow the Center to administer better care to marine mammals, educate the public, and improve research techniques. To meet these goals the Center is proposing to consolidate its facilities to one site. This would entail retrofit of the water filtration system, an upgrade of the pens and pools, consolidation of administrative and educational functions, and improved research and medical spaces through the reuse of some of the existing facilities, demolition of some non-historic structures, and construction of new space at the treatment site. It would also improve current access, circulation, and visitor parking at the site, and address issues of access by emergency vehicles to the treatment site.

**NEED FOR ACTION**

The existing facilities no longer meet the operational needs of the Center, particularly those at the treatment site. The ability of the Center to achieve its mission has been diluted by inefficiencies created by the widely dispersed location of services and sub-standard buildings and supporting infrastructure. The Center has undergone piecemeal changes over time as needs and funding became available. As a result, there are

inefficiencies and outdated facilities that now need to be modernized in order for the Center to fulfill its mission and continue its noteworthy programs.

The water transport and filtration systems only had minor modifications over time. The filtration tanks and pipes are spread above ground along the hillside on the southern edge of the facility, which are visually unappealing and also increase the exposure of facilities to sunlight. The ozone in the marine mammal life-support system reacts to sunlight and causes constant breakage of the poly vinyl chloride pipes and thus, leads to water loss through leakage. Old pumps malfunction and are unreliable, which is life threatening for the animals. The lack of shading over pools and the water treatment tanks causes algal blooms, which overstress the treatment system. Consequently, dirty water must be frequently dumped into the sewer and replenished with clean City water.

Old pens and pools need to be replaced. Many pens and pools were built almost 20 years ago and are deteriorated, undersized and now promote disease transmission from pen to pen. Also, the existing design of the pens and pools does not incorporate adequate safety precautions for volunteers working with the animals. Twenty-one of thirty existing pools are unfit for continued use and need to be demolished and replaced.

An NPS report produced in 2000 found that two to four times a year during heavy rainfalls, the sanitary sewer lift-stations overflow. The rainfall from the Center's pen enclosures appears to be a contributing factor to the lift-station failure.

Currently, circulation and parking are inefficient and in some situations unsafe, especially at the treatment site. Access by emergency vehicles to the treatment site and all of its built facilities is difficult and limited.

## **ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION**

From the scoping process, the following objectives were developed and used to assess preliminary alternatives.

- Improve the current facility for access, job efficiency, and safety for staff and visiting public;
- Improve and diversify treatment of sick or injured marine mammals by increasing the number of pools and creating more areas for quarantine;
- Improve sanitation and reduce cross-contamination in animal care areas by upgrading pools and plumbing systems;
- Provide improved indoor space for school programs that are grade-specific, activity based, reflect current research, and correlate with the California Academic Standards;
- Enhance overall visitor education in support of GGNRA's and the Center's programmatic goals;
- Improve interpretive information and programs regarding the work, natural history, and necessity of the preservation of marine mammals, as well as the Center's ongoing partnership with GGNRA;
- Visually integrate the design of new elements into the historic setting of the Marin Headlands, respecting both its landscape and architecture;
- Consolidate services for improved interdepartmental interactions;
- Improve research laboratories and work spaces to enhance the Center's success. Specifically, co-locate the laboratory and necropsy functions, resulting in faster diagnoses and maximum tissue and serum collection;
- Modernize the decaying physical plant to improve animal care, increase electrical efficiency and operability, and decrease water usage;

- Minimize environmental impacts to the area, including traffic and circulation;
- Improve ability to control wet weather discharge to NPS wastewater system, thus reducing conditions of overflow; and
- Improve visual quality of the site, including the rehabilitation of the former kennel site.

Four alternatives, including the selected and no-action alternative, were evaluated based on NPS policies, federal regulations, project criteria, goals and objectives set forth by the NPS and the Center, as well as input from the public, regulatory agencies, and NPS staff. These four options included differing configurations for accommodating the Center's program through some demolition of existing structures, construction of some new buildings, infrastructure upgrades, and re-configured as well as new parking (on-site and near-site configurations).

Options to these alternatives were considered during the planning process but were dismissed from further consideration for various reasons. One alternative studied the inclusion of alternate new paved roads within the Center's built footprint, to ease delivery of large animals and equipment and to facilitate emergency access. In particular, this alternative considered construction of a road directly through the middle of the treatment site, in close proximity to the mammals' pens and pools.

Another alternative was considered that would have located small, dispersed parking areas throughout the facility, including on the southeastern side where the water treatment facilities are now located. Other alternatives were considered that either did not include a new perimeter road (the ring road) or included only a partial ring road, in various configurations.

An early alternative was considered that included installing a pipe in order to bring salt water to the site. Re-locating the Center to a new site, either within or outside of GGNRA, was also considered.

All these options were considered but not carried forward as alternatives for full analysis in the EA based on their inability to meet project objectives, issues and concerns raised by the public and regulatory agencies, and the criteria used to evaluate the success of the project.

## **SELECTED ALTERNATIVE**

The Selected Alternative for the Marine Mammal Center Site and Facilities Improvements is based on a determination that the project as described below would best meet the Project Need and Purpose while still meeting the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Park Service's NEPA guidelines. The consolidation of almost all of the Center's functions on or adjacent to the treatment site, including the location of new parking on the west side of the access drive and adjacent to the built area, would bring maximum efficiency to the Center's operations and avoid the impacts that would occur with the development of a remote parking lot. The depiction of buildout on page II-6 of the EA has been slightly modified to better show parking. A corrected map is attached to the Errata.

The Selected Alternative in the Environmental Assessment includes the following actions.

### **Buildings**

- The demolition of approximately 5,600 square feet of non-historic structures at the treatment site.
- Approximately 4,800 square feet would be retained in Building #1065 at Fort Cronkhite for use by visiting researchers.
- Approximately 12,900 square feet of structures would be retained at the treatment site.

- The Selected Alternative includes the construction of three new buildings totaling approximately 17,500 square feet. New buildings would be constructed on the western portion of the treatment site. The buildings would be organized around a central open courtyard.

### **Utilities/Infrastructure**

- The Selected Alternative would provide key upgrades to the treatment site's filtration system, much of which would be relocated and housed underground in the old Nike missile silo on the east end of the treatment site.
- Pens and pools in the patient boarding area would be upgraded in the Selected Alternative. These upgrades would include replacing approximately 15,400 square feet of existing structures with approximately 19,500 square feet of pens and pools made of sturdier materials. The project also would provide shade structures to many pools; build pools at, or near to, grade to enable easier transfer of animals; enable animals to access pools with less stress; and include constructing a permanent cetacean pool to replace the portable one used today.
- Under the Selected Alternative water holding capacity at the treatment site would be increased from 47,000 gallons to 207,000 gallons. This increased capacity would be accommodated within the new pens and pools that would be larger and deeper than existing ones.
- Under the Selected Alternative wastewater would be combined with drainage from the pens and pools by installing area drains designed primarily for the wash-down operations in the pen enclosure. This wash-down operation necessitates flushing out raw sewage. Therefore, these area drains would be connected directly to the sanitary sewer. The area within the existing pens (about 10,000 square feet), which receives rainfall, would also be directed towards the sanitary sewer.
- To address the sanitary sewer lift-station overflow situation, the Selected Alternative will improve the current situation and ensure that the overall combined outflow from the Center's facilities would not exceed current levels nor exceed the capacity of NPS facilities. The project would include the operational capability to interrupt rainfall flowing to the pen enclosure area drains either by using the 40,000 gallon cetacean pool as an equalization basin or some comparable basin to regulate the timing and flow of rainfall.
- Under the Selected Alternative, the stormwater system would be designed to provide the maximum opportunity for surface run-off to infiltrate the soil. Use of vegetated swales and planting areas would be used to reduce run-off and remove contaminants. Parking lot drainage would be designed so that run-off is directed away from sensitive areas and fed into the stormwater system, not the sewer system.
- Under the Selected Alternative, all exposed existing Life Support System (LSS) equipment at the southeast corner of the site would be removed, the site restored and native vegetation planted in this area. New LSS equipment, including pumps, filters, fractionators, piping, valves, control panels, pressure gauges, contactor tank, and deaerators would be installed in and above the silos.
- Under the Selected Alternative, the two independent, above-grade, electrical feeds would be maintained but the feeds from the existing poles to new main switchgear equipment located within the new buildings at the northwest corner and within the above-grade silo enclosure on the east side of the treatment site would be placed underground.

## **Circulation and Parking**

- The Selected Alternative includes construction of a new perimeter ring road and new parking on the west side (double-loaded drive with 43 spaces) of the site. In addition, the Center would expand the parallel parking along the access road from 13 to 19 spaces. The former kennel site, south of the Center, would no longer be used for offsite storage and this area would be returned to open space with native plant restoration.
- Under the Selected Alternative, it is assumed that up to 16 parking spaces would be available for use by the Center in shared locations outside of the Center's assigned area. These spaces are needed for average daily operation of the Center and are currently within existing shared Fort Cronkhite parking lots and/or the NPS maintenance area.
- Under the Selected Alternative, the Center would continue to park up to two buses in the nearby NPS maintenance yard.
- Several times a year (no more than 6 times a year) the Center holds events that require additional parking beyond average daily operation for one-time events. In advance of these special events, the Center would be required to coordinate parking needs with GGNRA's Special Parks Uses Group. The Center will be required to monitor attendance and parking impacts during special events and make this information available to the Special Parks Uses Group.

## **Visitor Experience**

- Pens and pools would not be constructed during the season during maximum animal occupation (approximately March to September). The Selected Alternative would provide an enhanced visitor experience. There would be a clear sense of arrival from the access drive to the designated parking area and a path from the main parking area to the entrance on the west side of the Marine Science Community Education Center. Visitors would enter a discovery room, which teaches them about the Center and its work as well as natural history of marine mammals.

## **Other Actions**

- Pens and pools would not be constructed during the season during maximum animal occupation (approximately March to September).
- Under the Selected Alternative, preservation of natural dark would be incorporated into the site design to the greatest extent possible. Site lighting would be focused downward and shielded structurally to allow for natural night skies.
- Under the Selected Alternative, the Center's designers would incorporate principles of sustainable design throughout the project.

## **MODIFICATIONS TO THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE**

The following modifications were made to the selected alternative as a result of agency consultation and public comment. These changes will not result in new impacts beyond those discussed in the EA.

1. Of the 16 parking spaces available for use by the Center in shared locations outside the Center's assigned area, 3 would be at Fort Cronkhite near Building #1065.
2. Under all action alternatives, project construction would occur within two six-month periods to avoid the season (approximately March – September) of maximum animal occupation.
3. Construction of the ring road will result in the permanent fill of approximately 0.025 acres of non-jurisdictional wetland and may indirectly impact 0.055 acres of non-jurisdictional wetland.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers verified the wetland delineation and determined that they will not take jurisdiction over the wetland. Even though the impact to wetlands is minimal and the compensation requirement is waived for this project, the Center will complete wetland enhancement in the project vicinity in order to support the NPS goal of increasing the quality and quantity of the nation's wetlands. To replace the function, value, and overall area of the 0.08 acre wetland that will be directly and indirectly impacted by the project, a minimum of 0.16 wetland acres will be enhanced. A wetland enhancement plan with additional details will be developed at a later date.

## **NO ACTION**

The No-Action Alternative is a continuation of existing conditions, with a continued split operation between Fort Cronkhite and the Treatment site. There would be no net change in occupied square footage (26,000 sq. ft.). Under this Alternative, the existing facilities in the project area would be maintained without significant alteration. The Center's facilities would continue to be housed in modified freight containers and trailers. The water transport and filtration system would not be significantly upgraded. Old pumps that currently malfunction would undergo minimal upgrades. Under this alternative there would be no significant improvements to the visitor experience and there would be no consolidation of the Center's program. Administrative and some research functions would continue to be located at Fort Cronkhite, physically separated from the treatment site. There would be no changes to the kennel area south of the treatment site, which is currently used for storage.

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

The environmentally preferred alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy expressed in NEPA (sec. 101 (b)). This includes alternatives that:

- ☐ Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations.
- ☐ Ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.
- ☐ Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.
- ☐ Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.
- ☐ Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.

For this project the environmentally preferred alternative is discussed in the EA as Alternative 4. The smaller site and building footprint proposed for Alternative 4, when compared with Alternatives 2 and 3 would involve the least disruption to the biological and physical environment. Due to the reduced square footage of new construction, largely within the existing developed footprint, Alternative 4 would best protect, preserve, and enhance historic, cultural, and natural resources.

On the other hand, the Environmentally Preferred Alternative would bring no reduction in operational traffic and the associated safety improvements. In addition, operational functions under Alternative 4 would not fulfill project objectives for educational and site efficiencies as fully as the other action alternatives. The differences between the environmental impacts of Alternative 4 and the Preferred Alternative are not substantial given these considerations.

## **SCOPING**

- The NEPA process was initiated in April 2003 when A Notice of a Public Scoping was mailed.
- The NPS conducted a public scoping meeting on May 20, 2003. The Marine Mammal Center was one of many items on the agenda for this meeting so attendance numbers specific to this project are not known. However, three people spoke and public comments included concerns regarding a potential increase in single-occupancy traffic to the site, adequate traffic flow for buses, improvements to the education program facilities, and the need for focused growth for the Center (so that future improvements do not cause sprawl at the site). In addition two letters were received expressing support for the project and suggesting three very specific improvements to Center facilities
- In addition to the scoping effort described above, B.J. Griffin, the Executive Director of the Marine Mammal Center, met with several community groups in 2003 to solicit input from surrounding stakeholders. In July of 2003, she met with the Parks and Open Space Committee of the Marin Conservation League. In October of 2003, Ms. Griffin addressed the Sausalito Women's Club on the work of The Marine Mammal Center. Also in late October 2003, Ms. Griffin provided a briefing and tour for Dana Whitsell, City Manager of the town of Sausalito. All of these meetings were met with positive response, expressing support for the project.

## **SUMMARY OF AGENCY CONSULTATION**

### **Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and California State Historic Preservation Officer**

The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, as amended in 1992, requires federal agencies to consult with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) regarding undertakings that may affect historic properties. The NPS consulted with the ACHP and SHPO in the development of this Environmental Assessment to discuss specific aspects of the proposed project as well as compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 was opened on July 17, 2002. The NPS sent a letter dated August 20, 2004, asking the SHPO to concur with a finding of no adverse effect on the Forts Baker, Barry, and Cronkhite National Register District. The NPS and the Center will provide formal interpretation of the Nike/Cold War era at the improved site and will adhere to the Historic Compatibility Guidelines in design and construction. The NPS received written concurrence for this project from Mr. Milford Wayne Donaldson, the SHPO, dated September 28, 2004.

### **California Coastal Commission**

The Federal Consistency Unit of the California Coastal Commission (CCC) implements the federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 as it applies to federal activities. The NPS requested that the CCC concur with a negative determination that the preferred alternative would not adversely affect coastal zone resources. The NPS received a concurrence letter for the negative determination dated August 31, 2004.

### **San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board**

The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) has the authority to regulate "Waters of the State" under the Porter-Cologne Act. The NPS contacted the RWQCB to determine if the proposed project may impact "Waters of the State" and to apply for General Waste Discharge Requirements under Water Quality Order No. 2004-004 DWQ. On July 19, 2004, the NPS sent the RWQCB a copy of the EA and wetland delineation. The Notice of Intent Application for the General Waste Discharge Requirements was signed and sent on September 15, 2004. The RWQCB sent back written confirmation dated September 17, 2004, stating that the project is enrolled with the Water Quality Order No. 2004-004 DWQ.

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

The NPS requested that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) verify the wetland delineation to determine if there were any jurisdictional wetlands in or adjacent to the project site. The Corps verified the wetland delineation on July 15, 2004. The NPS received a letter from the Corps dated August 9, 2004, stating that they have determined that a Department of the Army authorization will not be required since any proposed activity on the site will not involve the discharge of dredged or fill material into a water of the United States, including adjacent wetlands, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

The NPS requested a list of federally listed endangered and threatened species that may be present within the project area from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in October 2003. The list received from the USFWS in November 2003 was used as a basis for the special-status species analysis in the environmental assessment. The NPS requested concurrence from the USFWS that the project is not likely to adversely affect any listed species or destroy or adversely modify designated or proposed critical habitat. The GGNRA received a memorandum dated August 31, 2004, from the USFWS concurring with the determination.

### **PUBLIC REVIEW**

The environmental assessment was made available for public review and comment during a 30-day period beginning on April 20, 2004 and ending June 1, 2004. Public notice of the EA was provided to individuals, organizations, and agencies through the scoping process; notification on the GGNRA website; notices in the Marin Independent Journal on April 28 and 29, 2004 announcing the release of the EA; mailing of the EA to 79 recipients; noticing the project on the mailed agenda for the May GGNRA Public Meeting (over 1,300 recipients) and a postcard mailing to 130 other interested parties. The EA was sent to local libraries including Marin City Library, Marin Civic Center Library, Corte Madera Library, and Muir Woods National Monument Library. In addition, the EA was posted to the park's website and hard copies were sent to interested parties upon request.

An Open House was held at the Marine Mammal Center on May 8, 2004. Tours were offered and several written comments were received. Approximately 35 persons stopped by during this open house.

The NPS conducted a public hearing on the EA on May 18, 2004. Four people spoke and provided public comments on the project. Their comments included support for the undertaking. One voiced concerns regarding the design of the proposed new construction. Details of these comments are also included in the Errata sheets attached to this document. Staff also presented the project and answered questions before the City of Sausalito on May 18, 2004.

During the public comment period 15 letters were received. Of these, eleven primarily voiced support for the Center and the proposed improvements. Several of these letters expressed a preference for the Selected Alternative.

The local Sierra Club chapter wrote two letters and met with Marine Mammal Center staff during the public comment period. The primary concerns raised were regarding increased visitation and potential traffic impacts. In particular, the first letter called into question the assertion made in the Environmental Assessment (EA) that an increase of up to ten visitors might be expected on peak days. As a result of meeting with Center staff, the Sierra Club submitted a second letter that proposes several actions which, if taken, would mitigate their concerns. A letter was also received from the City of Sausalito expressing similar concerns. The major points from these letters and responses, including additional proposed mitigation measures, are summarized in the Errata sheets attached to this document.

A comment letter was received from the Marin Municipal Water District stating that the Water District provides potable water to the project area and that the NPS has an annual water use entitlement for all of



GGNRA. The letter points out that the NPS' yearly entitlement is 215.54 acre-feet annually and actual annual water use through the NPS meter has varied from 85.95 acre-feet to 191.99 acre feet. The District emphasizes the need for GGNRA to stay within its yearly use entitlement. The attached Errata explains that the NPS is currently within its annual use entitlement and future projections that take into account improvements at Fort Baker show that NPS will still be within these entitlements. Further, the Errata explain that projected water use at the Center would decrease under the proposed project.

A more detailed description of all letters received and corresponding responses can be found in the Errata sheets attached to this document.

### **WHY THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Adverse impacts from the selected alternative may include:

- Local, Long and Short-term, Minor, Adverse Impact from stormwater impacts.
- Local, Long and Short-term, Moderate, Adverse Impact to wetlands, trees and non-native annual grasslands.
- Local, Long, minor adverse impact from increased contaminants that are carried over paved areas into Rodeo Lagoon.
- Local, short and long-term, minor - moderate, adverse effect on geology, soils and seismicity due to impacts associated with construction activity and adequate design of facilities.
- Local, short-term, minor, adverse impacts from hazardous materials.
- Local, short-term, minor, adverse impacts to air quality.
- Local, short-term, minor, adverse impacts from increased noise.
- Local, short and long-term, negligible - minor, adverse effect on transportation due to impacts associated with construction activity and increased visitor use.
- Local, long-term, moderate, adverse impact to cultural resources. These impacts would not have significant adverse effects on the Ft. Baker, Barry, and Cronkhite National Register Historic District.
- Local, long-term, moderate, adverse effect on visual resources due to visual intrusions associated with construction activity, and the introduction of new built features in the natural landscape of the Marin Headlands.
- The intensity and duration of these adverse effects would be mitigated by measures identified in the EA and in this document as "Mitigation Measures."

Beneficial impacts of the Selected Alternative may include:

- Long-term, moderate beneficial impact on water use in the project area.
- Minor, beneficial increased impacts from noise due to barrier formed by new buildings against an existing noise source.
- Local, long-term, minor, beneficial impact on recreation and public use in the project area.
- Local, long-term moderate impact to visual resources resulting from improvements to structures, placement of water filtration systems underground and clean up and restoration of the south-east corner of the treatment site and the former kennel site...
- Improvements to infrastructure for more efficient, effective, sustainable operation
- Better designed facilities for treatment and rehabilitation of injured or ill marine mammals.

- Better research into disease and parasites affecting marine mammals

### **Degree of effect on Public Health or Safety**

The Selected Alternative would have a positive effect on public health and safety, by improving conditions for staff and volunteers working with the marine mammals. Unsafe conditions that now exist along the access road would also be remedied by the Selected Alternative.

### **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas**

Construction of a ring road would result in direct impacts to 0.025 acres of wetlands and indirect impacts to 0.055 acres of wetlands. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that these are non-jurisdictional wetlands not covered by its authority. A majority of the small, natural and constructed drainage would be filled as well as a small portion of the larger swale drainage along the northern side of the property. To offset impacts to wetlands, enhancement actions to nearby degraded wetlands would occur at a 2:1 ratio. Therefore, a total of 0.16 acres or more of palustrine scrub-scrub and emergent wetlands will be enhanced at a site near the impacted area in the Rodeo Lagoon Watershed in the Marin Headlands. An enhancement plan will be developed by The Center, and approved by the NPS, prior to the commencement of groundbreaking of the site and facilities improvement project. Enhancement activities will begin the same year as the commencement of construction. A copy of the enhancement plan will be sent to the California Coastal Commission and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board.

The enhancement plan will include the removal of non-native invasive plants from the mitigation area to prevent loss of native vegetation through shading and competition. NPS plant ecologists will train The Center staff in identification and removal techniques. Native plants may be planted if it is determined that plantings will contribute to enhanced functions of the wetland area. The proposed enhancement plan will require The Center to act as stewards of the land to ensure the success of enhancement activities through ongoing management and monitoring for a minimum of five years. The Center will be responsible for documenting dates and type of work performed using existing Park “work performed” datasheets.

The enhancement plan will also include provisions for annual reporting that summarize the enhancement activities, progress-to-date, management, and monitoring. The report will include photographs of the site conditions so that they may be evaluated through time. Copies of the annual report will be provided to the NPS, California Coastal Commission, and San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board.

The Center would undertake site restoration activities to restore native plant habitat on the south-east edge of the treatment site and at the former kennel site. The Center would work with NPS staff in tree removals in the development of the new parking area.

The cumulative effects of adding three new buildings to the historic district are being assessed in the Section 106 Consultation for any possible immediate or cumulative effects to the Forts Barry, Baker and Cronkhite (FBBC) National Register Historic District. Since these new structures are on a previously developed area and are screened from general view by the topography and vegetation of the site, the effects are not expected to be adverse. New construction would be compatibly designed and sited in keeping with the character-defining elements of the FBBC Historical District. Historic Compatibility Guidelines would be used to ensure that the design of new buildings to be compatible in scale, massing, color, material and character with the historic district.

**Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial**

The project has generated substantial support during the public comment period. Some have raised concerns about the project resulting in an increase to traffic in the project area, stemming from an increase in visitation. During the public comment period, Center and NPS staff did additional traffic analysis, reviewed the visitor projections, and met with the concerned parties to address these issues. The Center has committed to keeping track of visitation and will develop a monitoring program with NPS staff. The NPS is proposing to monitor the situation, and if problems occur in the future, additional measures would be taken to minimize impacts.

**Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks**

The Selected Alternative would enable the continued viable operation of the Center for future generations. The potential upgrades and improvements would afford the Center a better opportunity to maintain and operate the services offered by the Marine Mammal Center. The Selected Alternative, thus, provides the NPS and the Center a clear understanding of the future of the Center. Rather than introducing highly uncertain unique or unknown risks, the Selected Alternative would allow greater stability and improved service at the Center.

**Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration**

The project would allow for the continued existence of a unique entity within GGNRA with specific needs and requirements. The Selected Alternative represents a decision that the Center and NPS are committed to an ongoing partnership. The benefits of this arrangement are detailed in the EA under the Purpose and Need for the action. Approval of this project would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Rather than establishing a precedent, these improvements would solidify an existing relationship that has been in effect since 1975.

**Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts**

The EA considered the cumulative impacts of the selected alternative with several past, present or reasonably foreseeable future projects and the analysis indicated that cumulative impacts would not have significant impacts.

**Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources**

The selected alternative would have negligible impacts to historic and archaeological resources. In July 2003, the Launch Area of the Air Missile Defense Site SF-87-L (the location of the treatment site) was determined to no longer be a contributing feature to the FBBC (National Register) Historic District. This determination was based on a recent assessment that concluded that successive modifications made by overtime had rendered the integrity of the site questionable.

**Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat**

Construction of the proposed facilities would temporarily disturb soils and vegetation in the project area. The past land use practices in the project area, including military operations, have substantially altered the native vegetation and it is likely that no special-status species occur at the site. Botanical surveys for

special status species and habitat assessments were conducted in April and August of 2004. The results of both survey efforts were negative. Therefore, no locally or regionally occurring special-status plants would be directly or indirectly affected under proposed Alternative 2.

**Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state, or local environmental protection law**

Implementation of the selected alternative would not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

**NO IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES**

The fundamental purpose of the National Park Service, established by the Organic Act and reaffirmed by the General Authorities Act, as amended, begins with a mandate to conserve park resources and values. Impairment is defined as an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible park manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources and values (NPS Management Policies 2001). The National Park Service has determined that implementation of the selected alternative and mitigation measures will not constitute impairment to Golden Gate National Recreation Area's resources and values. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the Marine Mammal Center Site and Facilities Improvements Environmental Assessment (EA), the mitigation measures, agency consultations, considerations of the public comments received, relevant scientific studies, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker guided by the direction in NPS Management Policies 2001.

**MITIGATION MEASURES**

The following mitigation measures are included as part of the Selected Alternative and will be implemented by staff either from the Center or NPS as described. In some cases additional descriptions of the mitigation measures discussed below are provided in the EA.

## MITIGATION MEASURES INCLUDED AS PART OF THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Topic	Responsible Party	Mitigation
<b>GENERAL MEASURES</b>		
Construction Staging Plan	Marine Mammal Center	A Construction Staging Plan shall be prepared by the Center and submitted for NPS review and approval prior to commencement of any excavation, demolition, removal, construction, or alteration of any site or structure. The Construction Staging Plan shall include information on schedule of work by dates and location where work would be performed, safety procedures, traffic management, noise mitigation, equipment to be used and procedures to be followed in the execution of work, solid and hazardous waste management, staging areas, clean-up, progress reports, complaint review process, and other areas of concern
Annual Report	Marine Mammal Center	Under the Cooperative Agreement between the NPS and the Center, the Center will submit an Annual Report that will include things such as a description of services and programs, number of annual visitors, number of special event attendants, an annual maintenance plan, and sustainability program update. The Center has committed to keeping track of visitation and will develop a monitoring program with NPS staff.
<b>WATER RESOURCES</b>		
General	Marine Mammal Center	Coordinate with the National Park Service regarding construction and maintenance of the new water system, sewer system and stormwater system. Particularly coordinate timing and rate regarding initial filling of facilities and demand and releases during peak use periods.
Water Conservation	Marine Mammal Center	Water saving devices, including low-flush toilets and low maintenance/drought tolerant landscaping shall be used.
Stormwater Management	Marine Mammal Center	Develop and implement a comprehensive stormwater pollution prevention plan for construction activities that complies with federal and state regulations and addresses all aspects of stormwater pollution prevention. The stormwater pollution prevention plan will be submitted to the park for review/approval prior to construction activities. The Plan will include structural best management practices (BMP's) (oil filters, biofilters, control of run-on and run-off, etc.) and operational best management practices (including spill prevention and control) throughout the project design. Parking lots and drainage facilities will include easily cleanable catch-basins, debris screens, and grease separators or similar water quality protection devices.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Impervious Surfaces	Marine Mammal Center	To offset the effects of new pavement and/or hardened surfaces added within the project area, the Center will work with NPS to arrange for appropriate site restoration of previously disturbed areas, such as the former kennel site. This could include removal of pavement, soil decompaction, or similar measures that would be detailed in site restoration action plans.
<b>BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES PROTECTION MEASURES</b>		
Native Plant Habitat	Marine Mammal Center	For areas identified for native plant restoration, site-specific Vegetation Restoration Action Plans will be prepared for review and approval by NPS prior to implementation. These plans will also include prescriptions for weed control and ongoing maintenance until the sites are fully established.
Protection for Nesting Birds	Marine Mammal Center & contractor	Construction activities shall be performed from September through February to avoid the general nesting period for birds. If construction cannot be performed during this period, pre-construction surveys shall be performed during the breeding and nesting season by a qualified biologist. If active nests are observed, buffers will be established (500 feet for raptors, 250 feet for other birds).
Protection for Special Status Species	Marine Mammal Center	Surveys were conducted for rare and endangered plants and mission blue butterfly habitat; the survey results were negative. Although California red-legged frogs do not breed on the site, they may occur there. Pre-construction surveys for California red-legged frogs will be conducted and an educational tailgate session will be conducted for the work crew prior to groundbreaking.
<b>WETLAND PROTECTION MEASURES</b>		
Protection for Wetlands	Marine Mammal Center	NPS will require mitigation for impacts to 0.08 acres of wetlands. The Center will develop a mitigation plan and enhance degraded wetlands at a nearby site at a minimum 2:1 ratio. The enhancement plan will be reviewed and approved by the NPS, and copies will be sent to the California Coastal Commission and Regional Water Quality Control Board prior to implementation. The enhancement site will be managed and monitored for a minimum of five years and annual reports will be submitted to the NPS, California Coastal Commission, and Regional Water Quality Control Board. A Notice of Termination will be filed with the Regional Water Quality Control Board upon completion of the project.
Protection for Wetlands	Marine Mammal Center & contractor	The Center will be responsible for complying with California Regional Water Quality Control Board Water Quality Order No. 2004-004 DWQ. The Center will file a Notice of Termination with the Water Board after the project has been completed.

Topic	Responsible Party	Mitigation
Protection for Wetlands	Marine Mammal Center & contractor	As described in the Statement of Findings and Appendix A of the EA, the MMC will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Design buildings and parking areas to provide maximum opportunity for surface runoff to be directed away from sensitive habitat and infiltrate the soil.</li> <li>2) Take measures to control erosion, surface scouring, and discharge to water bodies.</li> <li>3) Reduce risk of accidental hydrocarbon leaks or spills by scheduling use of mechanical equipment outside of low precipitation periods when possible. Use NPS-approved methods to protect soil and water from contaminants.</li> <li>4) Dispose of volatile wastes and oils in approved containers.</li> <li>5) Inspect equipment for hydraulic oil leaks prior to use on construction sites, and implement inspection for contamination of soil and water.</li> <li>6) Monitor the effects of runoff to Rodeo Lake and Rodeo Lagoon from new parking areas.</li> </ol>
<b>GEOLOGY, SOILS, AND SEISMICITY PROTECTION MEASURES</b>		
Protection from Settlement Impacts	Marine Mammal Center & contractor	The recommendations of the report on the site-specific geotechnical investigation conducted for this project (Cleary Consultants, Inc., 2003) will be implemented as part of the project. Report recommendations include site preparation requirements, fill placement and compaction parameters, and requirements for subsurface and surface drainage.
Excavation Activities	Marine Mammal Center	When possible, excavated materials will be reused on site or within the Park. Any remainder that cannot be reused will be disposed on site. If onsite disposal is not possible, appropriate disposal options will be used. Adjacent uphill slopes will be monitored for failure when work is being performed along the toe of the slope on the north side of the site.
Landslide and Slope Stability	Marine Mammal Center & contractor	NPS approved engineers will review the foundation and grading plans and be retained to provide soil engineering observation and testing services during the grading and foundation installation phases of the project. NPS approved engineers will approve final plans and conduct observations of the earthwork and foundation construction, as determined appropriate by this engineer.
Protection from Seismic Hazards	Marine Mammal Center & contractor	The design and construction of buildings and tanks will be in accordance with current standards for earthquake-resistance, and include measures to minimize the movement of objects within buildings and minimize the effects of such movement.
Additional Study	NPS	NPS approved engineers shall review the final design plans for the project and observe earthwork and foundation installation during construction.
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>		
General	Marine Mammal Center	Prepare a construction routing plan for review and approval by NPS prior to initiating any site preparation and construction activities.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Transportation Demand Management	Marine Mammal Center	The Center shall comply with the provisions of any future NPS Transportation Demand Management program for the Marin Headlands area. Provisions will be made so that carpools and vanpools receive preferential parking.
Event Coordination	Marine Mammal Center	Up to six times a year the Center holds events that require additional parking on a short-term basis. In advance of these special events, in order to avoid peak traffic conditions, the Center will be required to coordinate with GGNRA's Special Parks Uses Group. The Special Parks Uses Group may implement limitations on programs offered and scheduling of large events. An example is the requirement to hold Run for the Seals during the early-morning non-peak hours. During special events, the NPS could require that the Center provide traffic control officers at potential bottleneck locations to improve traffic flow and safety, in coordination with other relevant agencies as needed to ensure coordination with their operations and assure that proper permits are received and qualified personnel employed. The Center will be required to monitor attendance and parking impacts during special events and make this information available to the Special Parks Uses Group.
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION MEASURES</b>		
Archeological Monitoring	Marine Mammal Center	If previously unknown cultural resources are encountered during construction, temporarily suspend work in the immediate area to document discovered resources according to National Park Service standards.
Compatible Design	Marine Mammal Center	All new designs shall be reviewed for compatibility with the cultural landscape of the Historic District per the Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Design of all new construction, including site work, shall be compatible in terms of architectural elements, scale, massing, materials, and orientation. Review and approval will be carried out by NPS staff. Historic Compatibility Guidelines for New Facilities at the Center will be prepared as part of this project and will be reviewed and approved by NPS.
<b>VISUAL RESOURCES</b>		
General	Marine Mammal Center	Existing visual screening will be retained as deemed appropriate by NPS. This screening currently consists of invasive Monterey pines that must be managed as described below. Where screening is removed for purposes of construction activities, if requested by NPS it will be replanted with less invasive trees that still provide appropriate screening.



Topic	Responsible Party	Mitigation
<b>HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MEASURES</b>		
Hazardous Materials/Waste Management Plan	Marine Mammal Center	The Center shall submit for NPS review and approval plans and procedures for the management of hazardous materials and spill response consistent with current GGNRA standard operating procedures for hazardous waste management and the GGNRA Spill Response Plan.
<b>AIR QUALITY/DUST ABATEMENT MEASURES</b>		
General	Marine Mammal Center	Dust abatement measures will be developed and implemented that include restrictions on truck operations.
<b>NOISE ABATEMENT MEASURES</b>		
General	Marine Mammal Center	Perform all on-site noisy work above 76 A-weighted decibels (dBA) (such as the operation of heavy equipment) between September to March to minimize disruption to rescued marine mammals and related education programs. Within these months limit noisy work to week-days to minimize impacts to recreational users in the area.
General	Marine Mammal Center	During periods of concentrated construction potentially halt or limit on-site education programs to avoid noise exposure.
General	Marine Mammal Center	Submit a construction work plan/schedule that minimizes construction-related noise in noise-sensitive areas of the Center and the park. Submit to NPS for review and approval prior to commencement of construction activities.
General	Marine Mammal Center	Ensure that all construction equipment has functional exhaust/muffler systems. Use hydraulically or electrically powered construction equipment, when feasible. Locate stationary noise sources as far from sensitive receptors as possible. Limit the idling of motors except as necessary (e.g., concrete mixing trucks).
<b>VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE</b>		
General	Marine Mammal Center	The Center will develop and implement a visitor protection plan for park review/approval. The Center will keep track of visitation and will develop a monitoring program with NPS staff.
General	Marine Mammal Center	Provide protective fencing enclosures around construction areas to protect public health and safety.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
General	Marine Mammal Center	New public facilities shall be made accessible to people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. The goals of barrier-free accessibility shall be met and an emphasis shall be placed on affording visitors with disabilities the same experiences and opportunities as other visitors.
Interpretive Program	Marine Mammal Center	The Center shall include an expanded interpretive program from the current one in place to convey messages to visitors about park-related themes as well as the Center's mission. New exhibits and programs shall be developed in consultation with NPS interpretive staff.
Interpretive Exhibit	Marine Mammal Center	The Center shall work with NPS interpretive staff to develop a permanent interpretive exhibit that describes the former use of the land as a Nike Missile site during the Cold War era.
<b>UTILITIES</b>		
General	Marine Mammal Center	The Center will (except in an emergency) schedule peak water usage at non-peak times of day. In addition, washdowns and water system cycling shall not occur during peak storm events. During heavy rainfall events, the Center will have operational capability to interrupt sewage flowing from the pen enclosure area drains by means of an equalization basin to regulate flow under extreme conditions. The Center will coordinate with NPS to ensure that the water usage caps imposed by Marin Municipal Water District are maintained.
General	Marine Mammal Center	The Center will verify utility locations by contacting the Underground Services Alert prior to the start of construction.
General	Marine Mammal Center	The Center will observe all local, state, and federal standards in designing utility systems.
General	Marine Mammal Center	The Center will promptly reconnect utility services that are interrupted because of construction activities and provide advance notification to all residents, concessionaires, and others if utility service would be disrupted
General	Marine Mammal Center	Utilities shall, to the extent possible, be located underground or screened from principle viewing areas. Placement of above-ground appurtenances shall be screened from view to the fullest extent possible.
<b>NIGHT SKY MEASURES</b>		
General	Marine Mammal Center	Measures will be implemented to minimize effects of night lighting on the ability to view the night sky in the project area.

## CONCLUSION

Implementation of the selected alternative for the Marine Mammal Center Site and Facilities Improvements will not have significant impacts on the human environment. The determination is sustained by the analysis in the EA, agency consultations, the inclusion of public review, and the capability of mitigations to reduce or avoid impacts. Adverse environmental impacts that could occur are minor or moderate in intensity, duration, and context. As described in the EA, there are no highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence. There are no previous, planned, or implemented actions, which in combination with the selected alternative would have significant effects on the human environment. Requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act have been satisfied and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. NPS and the Center will implement the selected alternative as soon as practical.

Recommended:	<b>Original Signed</b>	<b>10/08/2004</b>
	Brian O'Neill, Superintendent	Date
	Golden Gate National Recreation Area, National Park Service	

Approved:	<b>Original Signed</b>	<b>10/20/2004</b>
	Jonathan B. Jarvis, Regional Director	Date
	Pacific West Region, National Park Service	